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TAGS: KPAO, AU, OPRC

SUBJECT: AUSTRIAN MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS: May 05, 2006

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War against Terror Legitimate  
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1. All Austrian media continue to report that US Attorney General Alberto Gonzales attended the US - EU JHA Ministerial Troika Meeting in Vienna. In a PAS-organized press roundtable May 4, the Attorney General emphasized that the United States' war against terrorism is "legitimate." Diverging views on the issue possibly arose from the fact that Americans and Europeans had different experiences with terrorism and therefore differing sensibilities, liberal daily "Der Standard" quotes. Nonetheless, A/G Gonzales emphasized that the United States' efforts in addressing terrorism is based on the rule of law: "President Bush has clearly stated that the US does not condone torture," he underscored. He also pointed out a major difference in the US and European approach on the matter, the "Standard" adds: While in the EU the war on terrorism is a criminal law issue, in the US it is a military campaign. Mass-circulation daily "Kurier" also reports on the press roundtable, and quotes the Attorney General as stressing that Guantanamo is

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"absolutely necessary." None of the critics, who have urged the US to close down the prison camp, have been able to present the US with an alternative, or been able to come up with a suggestions what American should do with the detainees, the daily quotes. Given the criticism, particularly from Europeans, Gonzales conceded that it is "important to explain what we are doing in the war on terror, and why we are doing it." Semi-official daily "Wiener Zeitung" reports that when asked about the alleged CIA overflights through Europe, the Attorney General declined to elaborate, saying this would only give rise to further speculations, and that no country could afford to compromise its security by openly discussing intelligence information. Centrist daily "Die Presse" quotes the Attorney General as conceding in the US counter-terrorism efforts "some mistakes" had been made. Referring to the torture scandal at Iraq's Abu Ghraib prison, he emphasized that what occurred there was "horrific. But these incident were investigated and the perpetrators held accountable." ORF TV's prime time evening news "ZiBII" also reported on the press roundtable.

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EU, US and Russia together against Terror and Crime  
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2. headlines mass-circulation tabloid "Kronen Zeitung," reporting like all Austrian media on the US - EU JHA Ministerial Troika Meeting in Vienna earlier this week. As part of Austria's EU Presidency program, Interior Minister Liese Prokop initiated a security dialogue between the EU, Russia and the US. US Attorney General Alberto Gonzales, DHS Michael P. Jackson, the advisor of Russia's President, Viktor Ivanov, and Russian Interior Minister Rashid Nurgaliev attended the meeting. Its objective was to develop strategies to fight global threats including terrorism, organized crime and illegal migration together, the tabloid says. These global threats, Prokop underscored, "need global answers." She therefore welcomes the fact that the foundation stones for future tri-lateral cooperation on security have been successfully defined at the meeting.

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Guantanamo: UN Is Pushing Vienna  
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3. headlines liberal daily "Der Standard" and reports that according to UN special rapporteur on torture Manfred Nowak the visit of US President Bush to Austria in June should be used to convey a joint EU position on the US prison at

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Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. "I would welcome the European Council presenting a joint position during the Austrian EU Presidency, which urges the US to close Guantanamo, and to shed light on what transpired in Europe [regarding the alleged secret prison camps in Europe and the transport of prisoners]," Nowak underscored following a hearing of the EU Parliament's investigative committee on CIA activities on Thursday. There were strong indications for US covert prisons in Europe, but he did not have conclusive evidence, the human rights expert admitted, according to the "Standard."

### ----- President Bush's Vienna Visit -----

4. Semi-official daily "Wiener Zeitung" briefly reports on the upcoming visit of US President George W. Bush for the US-EU summit in Austria in June. The daily outlines part of the president's expected schedule, saying he is to meet for talk with Austrian President Heinz Fischer and Chancellor Wolfgang Schuessel. EU Commission President Jos Manuel Barroso, EU foreign policy chief Javier Solana and EU Foreign Relations Commissioner Benita Ferrero-Waldner are also expected to attend the US-EU summit. Counter-terrorism measures are likely to be among the topics on the agenda.

### ----- Opposition Criticizes Bawag Plan -----

5. The Austrian opposition parties SPOe and the Greens have harshly criticized the government's bailout plan for the union-owned bank Bawag. Speaking on ORF TV's prime time evening news "ZiBII" on May 4, Greens leader Alexander Van der Bellen emphasized that although he agrees something has to be done for the bank, the OeVP-BZOe government with its proposed measures appears to be trying to send the Austrian Unions Association OeGB into bankruptcy. The Social Democrats' budget spokesperson Christoph Matznetter and other high-ranking SPOe officials have voiced similar concerns. The critics are referring to a clause in the coalition's aid package, which states that government responsibility in the case is tied to all Bawag owners [and thus the OeGB] having fulfilled unconditionally and without restrictions their payment and guarantee liabilities, ORF online news writes.

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Schuessel Brings Movement to Town Sign Stalemate

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6. says semi-official daily "Wiener Zeitung" in a report on the dispute over a Constitutional Court's ruling in favor of bi-lingual town signs in a number of Carinthian communities. According to the daily, the Chancellor wants to issue a decree on the town signs, telling journalists his solution will "adhere to the Constitutional Court's decision." The Carinthian Slovenes party welcomed Schuessel's announcement, but others remain skeptical whether the move will actually bring about a solution to the controversy that has been going on since the 1970s. Carinthian Governor Joerg Haider despite the court's ruling that cited the Austrian State Treaty's Article 7 on minority rights, has refused to have more bi-lingual town signs put up, however, the daily adds.

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Authority to Monitor Palestinians

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7. According to a front-page report in liberal daily "Der Standard," an international authority is to monitor the use of financial aid in the Palestinian territory and prevent money from flowing into Hamas' pockets. EU Foreign Relations Commissioner Benita Ferrero-Waldner suggested this in an interview with the daily, saying she will propose such a step at the upcoming EU foreign ministers meeting in Brussels next week. Such an institution could guarantee that the EU's "financial assistance, allocated for infrastructure or health care projects, does not go to Hamas, and that these projects are handled in a transparent manner." At the same time, the EU would "continue to support Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas in his effort to push the peace process." There was "no contact with Hamas, which is on the list of terrorist organizations," Ferrero-Waldner explained. She is confident her proposal will be met with approval, the "Standard" quotes, adding that the Middle East quartet will meet in New York next week to discuss its position on Hamas.

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